

Teacher's Guide

Background Information

Capital Letters

Student Exercises 1 and 2

These exercises deal with the proper use of capitalization, according to the following rules:

1. Capitalize all proper nouns. A proper noun names a particular person, place, or thing. (Common nouns name one of a group of persons, places, or things and are not capitalized.) The following proper nouns should be capitalized:
 - a. Names of people and initials of people's names. (*Examples: Jake R. Lobb, J.R.L.*)
 - b. Titles used in front of a person's name. (*Examples: Dr. Ross, Senator French*)
 - c. A title when it is used in direct address. (*Examples: What time can we meet, Governor? The governor did not have time to meet with us.*)
 - d. Names of places, such as countries, cities, mountains, streets, and oceans. (*Examples: Argentina, New York, the Rocky Mountains, First Street, Atlantic Ocean*)
 - e. Names of stars and planets, except *sun* and *moon*. The word *Earth* used as the name of our planet, unless it is preceded by the word *the*.
 - f. Nationalities, peoples, and languages. (*Examples: Irish, Mayan, Latin*)
 - g. Days, months, holidays, and special events. (*Examples: Tuesday, May, Christmas, the Crawfish Festival*)
 - h. Names of historical events and periods, documents, and awards. (*Examples: the Constitution, the Revolutionary War, the Pulitzer Prize*)
 - i. Names of businesses, government agencies, political parties, clubs, and schools. (*Examples: Ford Motor Company, the Defense Department, a Democrat, the Boy Scouts, Georgia Tech*)
 - j. Brand names of products. (*Examples: Coca-Cola, Tide detergent*)
 - k. Names of trains, ships, planes, and spacecraft. (*Examples: Amtrak, the U.S.S. Constitution, the Concorde, Challenger*)
 - l. Names of monuments, bridges, buildings, etc. (*Examples: the Lincoln Monument, Brooklyn Bridge, Empire State Building*)
 - m. The words *Mother, Father, Grandma*, etc., if they are used as a person's name. Do not capitalize them if they are used in such phrases as "my mother."
 - n. Direction words if they indicate a part of the country. Do not capitalize them if they merely indicate a direction. (*Examples: They live in the West. Drive two blocks west.*)
 - o. Capitalize references to religions, denominations, sacred works, books of the Bible, deities, or prophets. Do not capitalize *god* or *goddess* when it refers to gods of mythology. (*Examples: God, the Bible, the book of John, the goddess Athena*)
 - p. Abbreviations of proper nouns. (*Example: N. Congress Ave.*)
 - q. The first word and all important words in titles of books, plays, articles, paintings, periodicals, movies, musical compositions, poems, and other works of art. Capitalize small words like *a, an, the, in, on*, etc., only if they begin or end the title. (*Example: I am reading the book The Old Man and the Sea.*)



- r. Common nouns used as part of a proper noun. For example, in the proper noun *Morrison Elementary School*, the word *school* is capitalized because it is part of the proper noun.
 - s. Do not capitalize prepositions, the word *and*, or the articles *a*, *an*, or *the* when used as part of a proper noun. (*Example*: the Statue of Liberty)
2. Capitalize most proper adjectives. (*Examples*: Irish lace, English setter, Chinese writings)
 3. Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation that is a complete sentence. (*Example*: She said, "Come with me.") If the quoted sentence is interrupted by a phrase such as *he said*, do not capitalize the second part of the quotation. (*Example*: "Come with me," she said, "to try that new restaurant.")
 4. Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
 5. Capitalize the word *I* and its contractions.
 6. Capitalize the name of a school subject if it comes from the name of a country. Capitalize the name of a course followed by a Roman numeral. Do not capitalize other subjects. (*Examples*: English, French, Spanish, Chemistry II, chemistry, biology)
 7. Capitalize the first word of each line of a poem (unless the original poem did not do so).
 8. Capitalize abbreviations formed from initial letters. (*Examples*: the NAACP, AIDS)
 9. Capitalize abbreviations related to dates and times. (*Examples*: A.M., B.C.)
 10. Capitalize state abbreviations. (*Example*: MT)
3. Set off a noun in direct address.
(*Example*: Class, read Chapter Two for tomorrow.)
 4. Set off appositives (pairs of adjacent nouns that play the same grammatical role in a sentence).
(*Example*: Our neighbor, Charles Wilson, is a doctor.)
 5. Separate three or more items in a series.
(*Example*: I ordered a hamburger, fries, and a soft drink.)
 6. Separate a quotation from the rest of the sentence.
(*Example*: "I'll help," volunteered Miguel, "if you need me to.")
 7. Separate two or more adjectives preceding a noun.
(*Example*: I settled into my cozy, soft, new armchair.)
 8. Separate two or more independent clauses joined by *and*, *or*, *but*, *nor*, *for*, or *yet*.
(*Example*: We went to school early, and we talked to all our friends.)
 9. Set off nonessential clauses and nonessential participial phrases.
(*Examples*: My neighbor, who loves animals, works for the Animal Rescue League.
The boy, running down the stairs, tripped and fell.)

Commas

Student Exercises 3 and 4

Use commas to:

1. Separate parts of an address.
(*Example*: They have lived at 4315 Hill Street, Quincy, Illinois, since 1987.)
2. Separate parts of a date.
(*Example*: It happened on Monday, October 18, 2002, at 10 A.M.)

Use commas:

10. After an introductory word like *yes*, *no*, *well*, or *oh*.
(*Example*: Yes, I'd like to see that movie.)
11. After an introductory participial phrase.
(*Example*: Frightened by the noise, the child started to cry.)
12. After a series of introductory prepositional phrases.
(*Example*: Near the tree by the edge of the water, we sat and talked.)



13. After a long introductory prepositional phrase.

(Example: Up the dark, winding, steep circular staircase, the women walked carefully.)

14. After an introductory adverb clause.

(Example: After the organist finished playing, the audience clapped.)

15. After the salutation of a friendly letter.

(Example: Dear Susan,)

16. After the closing of any letter.

(Example: Sincerely yours,)

17. After a name followed by Jr., Sr., or M.D.

(Example: My father is John Edwards, Jr., and he is a lawyer.)

Use commas to:

18. Set off parenthetical expressions.

(Example: She won, not surprisingly, first place in each event.)

19. Set off parts of a reference that direct the reader to the exact source.

(Example: The assignment was to read the *Odyssey*, Book 10, pages 5–6.)

20. Set off a tag question.

(Example: You'll deposit this money, won't you?)

Avoid using any unnecessary commas!

Quotation Marks Student Exercise 5

1. Use quotation marks before and after a direct quotation.

(Example: Joan said, "I will walk the dog after supper.")

2. Do not use quotation marks for an indirect quotation.

(Example: Joan said that she would walk the dog after supper.)

3. When writing a dialogue or conversation, begin a new paragraph and use new quotation marks for each change of speaker.

(Examples: "What would you like to do tonight?" asked Joel.

"Well, there is a new movie in town," answered Selena, "but it might not be one that would appeal to you."

"What is it?" asked Joel.)

4. Use quotation marks around titles of short stories, one-act plays, articles, songs, poems, and themes.

(Examples: I read "The Telltale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe.

I memorized "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.)

5. Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

(Example: The fire marshall told us, "It is against the law to yell 'Fire!' in a crowded room if there is not really a fire.")

6. Use quotation marks around unusual expressions or slang.

(Example: My brother's team yells "You da man" to cheer a job well done.)

7. Always put a comma or period inside the closing quotation marks.

(Example: Sali said, "I am taking Spanish this year.")

8. Always put a semicolon or colon outside closing quotation marks.

(Example: My dad said, "We can't afford it"; my mother said, "Maybe next year.")

9. Place a question mark or exclamation point inside the closing quotation marks when it is part of the quotation.

(Example: I said, "When will you be ready to go?")

10. Place a question mark or exclamation point outside the closing quotation marks when it is a part of the whole sentence.

(Example: When will you ever say the words, "I'm ready to go"?)



Hyphens, Colons, and Semicolons

Student Exercise 6

1. Use a hyphen to divide a word between syllables at the end of a line.
2. Use a hyphen with compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.
(Example: She will turn twenty-one on her birthday.)
3. Use a hyphen with fractions used as adjectives.
(Example: The sale price is a one-third reduction.)
4. Use a hyphen with prefixes such as *self-*, *ex-*, *all-*.
(Example: He is a self-made man.)
5. Use hyphens when using a compound adjective in front of a noun.
(Example: He is a well-liked student.)
6. Use a hyphen to show a span of numbers.
(Example: The teacher assigned pages 50–60.)
7. Use a colon when you write the time in numerals.
(Example: The time is 10:30 P.M.)
8. Use a colon before a list of items, especially after expressions such as *as follows*.
(Example: The plan for the day is as follows:
eat, swim, nap, eat, swim, nap.)
9. Do not use a colon to introduce a list if the list follows a preposition or a verb.
(Example: To make banana bread you need to have flour, bananas, and salt.)
10. Use a colon between chapter and verse of a Bible citation.
(Example: Today's lesson is from John 3:16.)
11. Use a colon after the salutation of a business letter.
(Example: Dear Sirs:)
12. Use a colon before a long, formal, or definitive statement or quotation.
(Example: On the subject of raising taxes, the president had this to say: "Read my lips—no new taxes.")
13. When quoting more than one line of poetry or more than four lines of prose, use a colon after the introductory statement.
(Example: In his poem "The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost states:)
14. Use a semicolon to separate main clauses not joined by *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *yet*, or *for* (coordinating conjunctions).
(Example: He loved to play soccer; he was an excellent swimmer as well.)
15. Use a semicolon to separate main clauses that are joined by a conjunctive adverb (such as *however*, *furthermore*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*, *therefore*).
(Example: I love to swim; however, the water is pretty cold.)
16. Use a semicolon to separate items in a series if the series contains commas.
(Example: Some of my favorite nursery rhymes are "Hickory, Dickory, Dock"; "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe"; and "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary.")

Apostrophes

Student Exercise 7

1. Use apostrophes to show ownership.
(Examples: Mary's car, the boys' car, the children's toys, my mother-in-law's voice)
2. Use apostrophes to form contractions.
(Examples: I'll, it's)
3. Use an apostrophe and an *s* to form the plurals of figures, symbols, letters, and words referred to as such.
(Examples: There are two 4's in my phone number.
There are 3 a's in the word *banana*.
Your paragraph has too many I's beginning sentences.)
4. Use an apostrophe in place of omitted numbers in a year.
(Example: I visited Chicago in '02.)



Parentheses

Student Exercise 8

1. Use parentheses to set off supplemental material.
[Example: There is a school uniform (white shirt and blue pants) for grades 1–6.]
2. Do not use a capital letter and period if a complete sentence is put in parentheses within another sentence.
[Example: School uniforms (they are popular with parents) make buying school clothes easier.]
3. Use a capital letter if a complete sentence in parentheses stands on its own.
[Example: School uniforms make buying school clothes easier. (For that reason, they are popular with parents.)]
4. Put a comma, semicolon, or colon after the closing parentheses.
[Example: The room was decorated in school colors (blue and white), and it looked great!]
5. Put a question mark or exclamation point inside the parentheses if it is part of the parenthetical expression.
[Example: He ran the mile in four minutes (Whew!).]
6. Put a question mark or exclamation point outside the parentheses if it is part of the entire sentence.
[Example: He ran the mile in four minutes (his personal best time)!]

Italics, Underlining, and Quotation Marks

Student Exercise 9

(For rules on quotation marks, see Background Information for Exercise 5.)

1. Underline or italicize titles of books, magazines, newspapers, plays, movies, television series, long poems, paintings, sculptures, long musical

compositions, works of art, planes, spacecraft, and ships.

(Example: I read that article in *Time* magazine. OR I read that article in Time magazine.)

2. Italicize or underline, and capitalize, the words *a*, *an*, or *the* written at the beginning of a title—but only if they are part of the title.

(Examples: I read the book *A Long Journey Home*.

I read about it in a *Reader's Digest* issue.)

3. Use italics or underlining for foreign words not used commonly in English.

(Example: She has a certain *savoir faire*.)

Do not use italics or underlining if the foreign word is commonly used.

(Example: He brought me a bouquet.)

4. Use italics or underlining for words, letters, and figures referred to as such.

(Examples: The words *its* and *it's* are often misused.

The 's in your paper must be replaced.)

Numbers and Numerals

Exercise 10

1. To form the plural of numbers used to represent themselves, add an 's. The number, but not the apostrophe and s, should be italicized or underlined.

(Example: Your *4's* all look like *9's*.)

2. In formal or scholarly writing, spell out numbers that can be written in one or two words.

(Example: There are fifty states in the United States.)

3. Spell out any number that comes at the beginning of a sentence.

(Example: Fourteen boys are on the team.)

4. Use numerals to write numbers that have more than two words.

(Example: There are 5,280 feet in a mile.)



5. Very large numbers may be written as a numeral followed by a word such as *million* or *billion*.
(*Example:* The sun is 93 million miles from the earth.)
6. Use numerals to write amounts of money, decimals, or percentages.
(*Examples:* He got 90% of the answers right. She weighs 89 pounds.)
7. If an amount of money can be written in one or two words, it should be spelled out.
(*Example:* He had only two dollars left.)
8. Use numbers to show the year and day in a date.
(*Example:* He was born on July 4, 1999.)
9. Use numerals to show an exact time, but spell out times that do not use A.M. or P.M.
(*Examples:* 3:14 A.M., five o'clock)
10. Use numerals for street names over ten and for all house, room, or apartment numbers. Spell out numbered streets of ten or under.
(*Examples:* 25th Street, Third Avenue, Apartment 3G)
11. Use numerals for pages, acts, lines, or scene numbers.
(*Example:* Act 2, Scene 3 can be found on page 114. Please memorize lines 12–20.)

Abbreviations

Student Exercise 11

1. Use only one period if an abbreviation comes at the end of a sentence. If the sentence that ends in an abbreviation should end with a question mark or exclamation point, use both punctuation marks.
(*Examples:* My doctor is John Coleman, M.D.
Is your doctor's name John Coleman, M.D.?)
2. When abbreviations are formed from the first letters of several words, omit the periods and use all capital letters.
(*Examples:* We are members of the YMCA.
CBS, NBC, and ABC are all television networks.)

3. Abbreviations related to time and dates are capitalized.
(*Examples:* 200 B.C., 5:15 A.M., 6:02 P.M.)
4. Capitalize abbreviations of proper nouns.
(*Example:* The U.S. Congress is in session.)
5. Postal abbreviations are written with two capital letters and no periods.
(*Example:* MT is the postal abbreviation for Montana.)
6. Personal titles are usually abbreviated.
(*Example:* Dr. Smith is not in his office today.)
7. Abbreviate units of measure used with numerals in scientific writing. Do not abbreviate them in ordinary writing. Do not add *s* to these abbreviations.
(*Example:* The board measured 12 ft. 3 in. The board was about 12 feet long.)
8. Do not use periods after abbreviations of units in the metric system.
(*Example:* Add 3 g salt to 2 ml water.)

Subject-Verb Agreement

Student Exercise 15

1. Use a singular verb with a singular subject.
(*Example:* That tree is a Japanese maple.)
2. Use a plural verb with a plural subject.
(*Example:* Roses are the favorite flowers of many gardeners.)
3. The number of the subject is not changed by a phrase following the subject.
(*Example:* Roses, unlike the hosta grow best in full sun.)
4. These pronouns are singular: *each*, *either*, *neither*, *one*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *no one*, *nobody*, *anyone*, *anybody*, *someone*, and *somebody*.
(*Example:* Each of us likes a different sport.)
5. These pronouns are plural: *several*, *few*, *both*, and *many*.
(*Example:* Several of us are going to the game.)
6. These pronouns may be singular or plural: *some*, *all*, *most*, *any*, or *none*.



(Examples: Most of us like this chocolate dessert.

Some of this bread is moldy.

Some of these lentils are not cooked.)

7. Subjects joined by *and* take a plural verb.

(Example: Raoul and Elena are on the track team.)

8. Singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take singular verbs.

(Example: Joe or Henry is going to be my date.)

9. If a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the subject closer to the verb.

(Example: Craig or the boys are going to mow the lawn today.)

10. If an amount of money refers to one unit, it is singular. If it refers to the individual units, it is plural.

(Examples: Twenty-five dollars is too much for that shirt.

Twenty-five dollars are in that envelope.)

11. *Every a* or *many a* before a subject calls for a singular verb.

(Example: Many a tear has to fall, but it's all in the game.)

12. A title is singular, even if it ends in a plural noun.

(Example: The book Great Expectations features the mysterious girl Estella.)

Principal Parts of Verbs Student Exercise 16

1. All English verbs have four principal parts: a base form, a present participle, the simple past form, and a past participle.

(Example: jump, jumping, jumped, have jumped)

2. A regular verb forms its past and past participle by adding *ed* to the base form.

There may be spelling changes when the *ed* is added:

(Examples: spy, spied

flop, flopped

argue, argued)

3. An irregular verb forms its past and past participle in some way other than by adding *ed* to the base form.

(Examples: lie, lying, lay, have lain

rise, rising, rose, have risen)

Consistent Verb Tense Student Exercise 17

1. Do not change verb tense when two or more events happened at the same time.

[Examples: She forgot her watch, so she came home late. (both past)]

He hurries to the table and gulps his breakfast. (both present)]

2. Change tenses to show that one event came before another.

(Example: When we arrived, the play had already started.)

3. Use the present tense to make a statement about a general truth or fact, even if the rest of the sentence is in the past tense.

(Example: Gio forgot that seven times eight is fifty-six.)

Case of Personal Pronouns Student Exercise 18

1. Use the nominative pronouns (*I, he, she, we, and they*) as subjects or predicate nominatives.

(Example: He and I went skating.)

2. Objective pronouns (*me, him, her, us, and them*) should be used only as objects. If the direct object is made up of a noun and a pronoun, the objective pronoun must still be used.

(Example: Mrs. Hill helped Bill and me.)

3. When speaking of yourself and others, mention yourself last.

(Example: "Shanika and I," not "me and Shanika")

4. Don't use an apostrophe in possessive personal pronouns like *my*, *mine*, *her*, *his*, *hers*, *its*, *ours*, *our*, *your*, *yours*, *their*, or *theirs*.

[Example: The dog chased its tail. (not *it's*)]

5. Verbs must agree with their pronoun subjects.
[Example: He doesn't live here. (not: He don't live here.)]

6. Use the nominative case of a personal pronoun after any form of the verb "to be."

(Example: It is she.)

7. Use possessive pronouns before gerunds (-ing forms used as nouns).

(Example: Your yelling bothers me.)

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement Student Exercise 19

1. A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number and gender. (*Number* means singular or plural; *gender* means male, female, or neuter. *Antecedent* means the noun to which the pronoun refers.)

[Examples: She worked hard to get her high school diploma. (she, her—both female)

She and her brother worked hard to get their diplomas. (plural)]

2. A pronoun must agree in person with its antecedent.

[Examples: Sara is going to the beach, where you can get a tan. (incorrect)

Sara is going to the beach, where she can get a tan. (correct)]

3. Use a singular, personal pronoun when the antecedent is a singular, indefinite pronoun.

[Examples: Each of the boys must buy their own uniform. (incorrect)

Each of the boys must buy his own uniform. (correct)]

4. Use a plural verb when the antecedent is a plural, indefinite pronoun.

[Examples: Both of the boys already has uniforms. (incorrect)

Both of the boys already have uniforms. (correct)]

Clear Pronoun Reference Student Exercise 20

1. State the antecedent clearly when you use the pronouns *this*, *that*, *which*, and *it*.

[Examples: A forest fire spread, which started from a careless camper. (incorrect)

A forest fire, which was started by a careless camper, spread. (correct)]

2. Make sure a pronoun cannot refer to more than one antecedent.

[Example: When the boy lost sight of his father, he cried. (Who cried?)]

Dangling or Misplaced Modifiers Student Exercise 22

1. A dangling modifier is a modifying phrase or clause that does not clearly or sensibly modify any word in the sentence. When a modifying phrase begins a sentence, it should be followed by a comma, and then the word that the phrase modifies.

[Examples: Playing football, my leg was hurt. (incorrect)

Playing football, I hurt my leg. (correct)

Scrubbing the floor, the baby woke up. (incorrect)]

Scrubbing the floor, I woke up the baby. (correct)]

2. Modifying phrases and clauses should be placed as near as possible to the words they modify. Otherwise, the meaning of the sentence can be distorted. The modifier can appear to modify the wrong word or more than one word in the sentence.

[Examples: On the stove I saw the soup boiling over. (incorrect)

I saw the soup boiling over on the stove. (correct)]



Sentence Fragments and Run-on Sentences

Student Exercise 23

1. A sentence fragment may lack a subject, a verb, or both.

[Examples: Jumped across the room. (no subject)]

The entire sixth grade class. (no verb)

Across town on the subway. (no subject or verb)]

2. A fragment may sometimes be corrected by correct punctuation.

[Examples: I enjoy swimming. Especially in the summer. (incorrect)]

I enjoy swimming, especially in the summer. (correct)]

3. Fragments may incorrectly contain the infinitive or participle form of a verb.

[Examples: Harry hurrying all day long. (incorrect)]

Harry hurried all day long. (correct)

Erin to be the secretary of the group. (incorrect)

Erin will be the secretary of the group. (correct)]

4. A run-on sentence is two or more complete sentences written as though they were one sentence.

- a. Two or more sentences may *not* be written without punctuation marks or conjunctions (joining words) between them.

[Examples: We have a long weekend we are so excited. (incorrect)]

We have a long weekend. We are so excited! (correct)

We have a long weekend; we are so excited! (correct)

We have a long weekend, and we are so excited! (correct)]

- b. Two or more sentences may not be connected with a comma. (This is known as a "comma splice.")

[Examples: I am hungry, it's time for lunch. (incorrect)]

I am hungry. It's time for lunch. (correct)

I am hungry; it's time for lunch. (correct)

I am hungry because it's time for lunch. (correct)]

- c. A comma is used before a coordinating conjunction joining two main clauses.

[Examples: It is Friday and I have to work late. (incorrect)]

It is Friday, and I have to work late. (correct)]

Varying Sentence Styles

Student Exercise 24

1. Vary the kinds of sentences you write, using simple, compound, and complex sentences. Using all simple sentences makes writing seem choppy.
2. Vary sentence length as you write, avoiding too many short sentences and too many long, strung-out sentences.
3. Vary the beginnings of your sentences. Avoid putting the subject first in every sentence. Sometimes start with a modifying word, phrase, or clause.

Using Interesting Language

Student Exercise 25

1. Use interesting synonyms for tired adjectives such as *nice*, *wonderful*, *great* . . .
2. Use specific rather than general words to create a picture for the reader.

[Examples: The cat jumped on its toy. (general)]

The tiny, black kitten pounced on the catnip-filled toy mouse. (specific)]

3. Use strong, rather than weak, verbs.

[Examples: She said, "Help!" (weak);

She screamed, "Help!" (strong)]



4. Avoid using tired clichés and trite expressions. Clichés are words or expressions that are so overused they have lost their meaning and effectiveness. Examples of these are: *busy as a bee*, *like bumps on a log*, *teach an old dog new tricks*, *get the ball rolling*.

Avoiding Wordiness

Student Exercise 26

1. Do not use double negatives.
[Examples: He don't never go there. (incorrect)
He doesn't ever go there. (correct)]
2. Eliminate superfluous words.
[Examples: In my opinion I think that is right. (wordy)
In my opinion that is right. (better)]
3. Avoid unnecessary repetition of ideas.
[Examples: In the winter I like to go ice skating in the winter. (repetitious)
In the winter I like to go ice skating. (better)]
4. Some clauses and phrases may be reduced to fewer words.
[Examples: I have a friend who is a native of Mexico.
I have a Mexican friend. (better)]
5. Avoid writing in an unnatural, overwritten style. Too many big words, foreign words, flowery phrases, etc., make writing awkward and hard to understand.
[Examples: Illumination is required to be extinguished upon vacating these premises. (wordy)
Turn out the light when you leave. (better)]

Making Comparisons Correctly

Student Exercise 27

1. Most adverbs and adjectives have three degrees: the base form, the comparative, and the superlative. The comparative is used to compare two things; the superlative three or more.

(Example: I am tall. My brother is taller. My dad is the tallest of the three of us.)

2. For most one-syllable adverbs and adjectives, add *-er* to form the comparative and *-est* to form the superlative.
(Example: black, blacker, blackest)
3. Sometimes spelling changes are needed when adding *-er* and *-est*.
[Examples: big, bigger, biggest (doubling the g)
blue, bluer, bluest (dropping an e)
dry, drier, driest (changing the y to i before adding the ending)]
4. With most two-syllable adjectives, add *-er* or *-est* to make comparisons.
(Examples: pretty, prettier, prettiest)
5. Use *more* or *most* to form the comparative or superlative of an adverb that ends in *ly*.
(Example: I can see more clearly with my new glasses.)
6. If an adjective or adverb has three or more syllables, always use *more* or *most* to form the comparative or superlative.
(Example: She is even more beautiful than I remembered.)
7. The comparative and superlative forms of some adverbs and adjectives are made irregularly.
(Example: good, better, best)
8. Do not make double comparisons by using both *more* or *most* and *-ed* or *-est* at the same time.
[Examples: She was the most tallest girl in the class. (incorrect)
She was the tallest girl in the class. (correct)]
9. Avoid incomplete comparisons. These occur when the words *other* or *else* are left out of the comparison.

[Examples: A diamond is harder than any mineral. (This is not clear because it cannot be harder than itself.)
A diamond is harder than any other mineral. (better)]



10. Avoid illogical comparisons.

[Examples: A piranha's teeth are sharper than a man. (What about a man?)

A piranha's teeth are sharper than a man's (teeth).]

11. Always use *good* as an adjective. *Well* can be used as an adverb telling how well something was done or as an adjective meaning "in good health."

[Examples: You did a good job. (correct use as an adjective)

You did good on that test. (incorrect)

You did well on that test. (correct)

Do you feel well today? (correct)]

12. Always use *bad* as an adjective. Use *badly* as an adverb.

[Examples: She has a bad cold. (correct)

She did bad on the test. (incorrect)

She did badly on the test. (correct)]

Correct Usage Student Exercise 28

The following is a list of words and phrases that may present usage problems:

advice—(noun) Opinion about how to solve a problem

advise—(verb) To give advice to

a lot—A large number of

alot—This is not a word

awhile—(adverb) For some time

a while—(noun) A period of time

accept—(verb) To agree

except—(preposition) But OR (verb) To leave out

affect—(verb) To influence

effect—(noun) Result OR —(verb) To make happen

ain't—Nonstandard usage. Do not use this word.

all ready—Completely ready

already—Done in the past

all right—O.K.

alright—Incorrect spelling of *all right*. Do not use.

allowed—Permitted

aloud—Out loud

all together—In a group or collectively

altogether—Completely or thoroughly

among—Used to discuss three or more persons or things

between—Used to discuss two persons or things

bad—Always an adjective. Use after linking verbs.

badly—Always an adverb

beside—Next to

besides—In addition to

breath—(noun) Air breathed into and out of the lungs

breathe—(verb) To inhale and exhale air

burst, busted—Nonstandard. Do not use these words to mean to break or burst.

capital—Capital city; capital letter; wealth

capitol—Building in which a legislature meets

choose—(verb) To select or pick out

chose—(verb) Past tense of choose

coarse—(adjective) Not smooth; rough

course—(noun) A course of study; a direction

councilor—(noun) A member of a council

counselor—(noun) A person who gives advice or guidance

could of, might of—Do not use these phrases. Use *could have* or *might have*.

dear—Loved and cherished

deer—An animal

different from, than—Use *different from*, not *different than*.

dew—Water droplets condensed from the air

due—Owed or owing

emigrate—To move from one country to another to live

immigrate—To come to another country to live

fair—Conforming to the rules

fare—A payment

farther—Refers to physical distance

further—Refers to a greater extent in time or degree; additional

fewer—Used to refer to things that can be counted individually

less—Used to refer to quantities that cannot be counted

former—Used to refer to the first of two things mentioned before



latter—Used to refer to the second of two things mentioned before
good—Always used as an adjective
well—Used as an adverb meaning capably or satisfactorily
hole—An open place, gap, or space
whole—Entire; all
irregardless—Nonstandard. Do not use.
regardless—In spite of everything; anyway
its—A possessive pronoun
it's—A contraction meaning “it is”
isle—Island
aisle—Passageway between row of seats
lay—To put or place something somewhere
lie—To rest or recline
loose—(adjective) Not tight; free
lose—(verb) To fail to keep or find
may be—(verb) Indicates possibility
maybe—(adverb) Perhaps
passed—(verb) Past or past participle of *pass*
past—Having existed at an earlier time
peace—Absence of war or other hostilities
piece—A part of a whole
precede—To go or come before
proceed—To go forward with something

principal—First in rank or importance; leader of a school
principle—Rule, standard
raise—To lift or make something go upward
rise—To move upward
reason is because—Wordy. Do not use this phrase.
reason is that—Because
respectfully—With respect; showing respect
respectively—Each in the order named
said—Past tense of *say*
says—Present tense of *say*
set—To place something
sit—To rest in an upright position
than—(conjunction) Used in comparisons
then—(adverb) Used to show a sequence of events
their—Possessive form of *they*
there—Used to indicate a place; at or in a place
they're—Contraction of *they are*
weather—Activity of the atmosphere at a given time or place
whether—(conjunction) Used to introduce one of two alternatives
who's—Contraction for *who is*
whose—Possessive form of *who*
your—Possessive pronoun
you're—Contraction for *you are*

